

[11 cont.]

369 dismissing all present or future suitors. Originally this was an
584 indemnity to be shared among the unhappy rivals, or was in-
583 tended as reimbursement for the advances collected by the
parents of the girl without her knowledge. Some reputedly
avaricious families demand it several times.

369 3. The Marriage Portion. Its amount does not rigorously
583 follow the fluctuations which characterize the other expenses.
It amounts to 2,500 francs and is fixed by a marabout, by con-
verting the heads of cattle of Koranic law into French money.
Religious in nature and hence escaping the whims of fashion, its
importance is wholly secondary. One can delay five or six
years or more before paying it. Many monogamous households get
along very well, even though not a sou of the marriage portion
has been paid. Payment becomes obligatory, however, when
[587] the husband wishes to contract a second marriage.

4. Ngegenay (The Pillow). This is an optional expense,
but one that good breeding requires. It consists of leaving under
[585] the wife's pillow a sum of money and a quantity of little gifts
(perfumes, sandals, bracelets, etc.) the day after the first
nuptial contact. It is like a manifestation of the joy that one
felt upon finding his wife to be virgin.

5. The Decoration. This is the essence of the Saint-
Louis marriage. All of the expenses listed up to here are more
or less private, or in any case little known, except for the mar-
riage portion, by the neighboring quarters or the relatives far
away from the city. For the Decoration, the payment is pre-
ceded by widely disseminated announcements several months in
advance. It is exhibited before all the relatives of the married
couple, their friends, their acquaintances, before all the per-
sons of inferior castes, who go everywhere and who will repeat
what they have seen, in brief, before the city.

Optional in the beginning, it today assumes such an
obligatory character that only in Saint-Louis do the instructors
dare to avoid it or to minimize its importance. Of what is the
Decoration composed? Essentially of a box, a basket for effects,
and a basket of small goods, but most especially what one has
been able to amass that is precious and rare, and which has not